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ABSTRACT

This study first reviews research on factors that influence the ways individuals make decisions, such as the size of an organization and its structure, the nature of the power coalitions within the organization, and certain traits such as risk-taking, self-concept, and gender. The study interviewed 33 administrators at varying levels within six institutions of higher education, including five presidents, five academic deans, six deans of students, six chairpersons, five directors or deans of admissions, and six directors of financial aid. Interview data are analyzed by administrator rank and by the two factors that seemed to most influence decisions: gender and power. Among the conclusions are the following: (1) organizational structure and size determined the way administrators made decisions and played their part in the decision process; (2) administrators relied on more than one source of information or support for their decisions; (3) administrators positively valued consultative decision-making; and (4) female administrators were perceived as being more nurturing, more attentive to detail, and more process-oriented than their male counterparts. Includes 26 references. (JDD)

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Administrative Decision-Making Styles in Higher Education

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Administrative Decision-Making Styles in Higher Education

Janet Formicola Cobelli & Rodney Muth

Research on decision making has been confined principally to men and women in business settings (Hall, 1982; Kanter, 1977; Peters & Waterman, 1984). A complex and critical process (Hall, 1982), decision making often is constrained by organizational factors--including the structure of the organization, its size, the nature and number of power coalitions, and the like--as well as such human factors as personality traits and risk-taking behavior. This study focuses on some of these factors and how they affect decisions of administrators in higher education.

Context

As societal and global factors raise the importance of education generally and higher education specifically, concern about the decision and governance processes of these institutions has increased (Argyris & Cyert, 1980; Mann, 1975; Weiss, 1982). In many instances, the social roles, financing, and governance arrangements of educational institutions are being challenged and are undergoing significant change. To anticipate problems better and to make more intelligent and informed responses, colleges and universities increasingly will have to use more sophisticated planning and information systems (Austin & Gamson, 1983; Friedmann, 1987).

Universities, like most sectors of society, face two general types of problems (Hipps, 1982): the need for adequate, long-term support and the acceptance by the university community of necessary adaptations to societal changes to maintain and broaden its traditional influence. In addition, internal communication processes often have not kept pace as universities have

grown and become more complex (Hipps, 1982). The difficult decisions and tensions that universities will confront as the turn of the century looms will increase the importance of more effective communication and more reliable information.

The transition from an industrial society to an information society, changes in demography, the rapidity of technological advances, and the development of new partnerships among business, industry, and academia call for modifications in our educational practices, procedures, and programs. Colleges and universities are entering one of the most challenging and difficult times in their history as they respond to declines in enrollment, scarcity of externally funded fellowships, and reductions in outside research support (Pelczar & Solomon, 1984). The decisions made in response to the problems and issues will have a profound effect on the institutions, their staffs, and their clients.

Decision Processes

Idealized decision-making processes, influenced by the military (Burns, 1978), lend themselves to order and rationality: a problem is defined and isolated, information is gathered, alternatives are surveyed, an end is established, means are created to achieve that end, and a choice is made. In light of modern experience, however, revisionists suggest that decisions are made not in a vacuum but in the context of political and psychological forces which surround them (Burns, 1978; Patterson, Purkey, & Parker, 1986). Similarly, decision makers are not standardized and replicable, but are people whose motivations, attitudes, and personal goals affect whatever decisions they make. These characteristics lead to unique interactions that create a process in groups or organizations that is "a twisted, unshapely, halting flow of interactions between people" (Burns, 1978, p. 379).

Factors That Affect Decisions

Various factors influence the ways individuals make decisions. For example, the size of an organization and its structure, the nature of the power coalitions within the organization, and certain traits such as risk-taking, self-concept, and gender affect how decisions are made.

As decision makers, academic administrators not only need to understand the kinds of decisions made at different levels in the organization, but they also need to know that decision making requires knowledge of the total organization, the people involved, the time constraints, and the complexity of the problem (Hill, 1979). Further, academicians need to take a long-range point of view, recognizing that planning in academe will necessarily involve increasing numbers of participants and be subject to greater rigidities and higher-level controls. Increasingly tough and public decisions will have to be made on tenure, promotions, salary increases, and staff reductions while the available pool professors shrinks and student populations decline and change (Hipps, 1982).

Organizational Factors

Decisions often are constrained by an organization's structure as well as its size. Blau (1973) defines organizational structure as "the distribution, along various lines, of people among social positions that influence the role relations among these people" (p. 12). Most organizations contain ranks, or a hierarchy. The positions that people fill in the hierarchy have rules and regulations that specify, in varying degrees, how persons are to behave in these positions. These ranks also provide for a division of labor; some people or positions are specialized to different jobs or tasks.

Organizational structures provide the settings in which decisions are made. In addition, the quality and quantity of information surrounding a

decision is largely determined by the nature of the structure through which it flows. Organizational structures tend to serve three basic functions (Hall, 1982): the production of outputs and the achievement of goals, the regulation of individual variations in behavior, and the allocation of power to positions. All of an organization's activities are carried out within some form of structure.

Power in Academe. In any organization, power is a critical variable. Organizational power results from occupying an organizational position, from tradition and precedent, from personal attributes, as well as from the organization's relationships with its environment. Decisions are strongly influenced by the power of the individuals making the decisions. In turn, organizational structures determine decision-making processes; for example, an individual's place in the hierarchy often determines the nature of the decisions to be made.

Important manifestations of power in higher education institutions include: control of the budget, personnel appointment and removal, control of legitimate access to the decision-making process, and control of information. Much of the power of bureaucrats derives from access to or control of information (Baldridge, 1971). Specific decision processes often resemble political struggles (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Hage, 1980): interest groups are formed, influence tactics are used against decision makers, coalitions are constructed, legislative bodies are pressured, compromises are negotiated. Over time, these individual decisions create power structures which differ across academic organizations (Baldridge, Curtis, Ecker, & Riley, 1978), with various groups gaining long-term control until changing events undermine their positions.

Rank and Institutional Size and Prestige. Current research on faculty members' power and participation in organizational decisions indicates that professional rank and credentials, institutional size, and institutional prestige are related to professorial power and autonomy (Kenen & Kenen, 1978). Faculty at more prestigious institutions tend to exercise greater power and have more autonomy (Baldridge et al., 1978). Expertise appears to be the key variable. Faculty members at more prestigious institutions are likely to be recognized as experts in their areas of study. Faculty in larger institutions are more likely to develop a strong faculty government. Those in smaller institutions are more often subject to the decrees of the administration (Baldridge, 1971).

External pressures and the responses of colleges and universities to them threaten faculty autonomy (Carnegie Foundation, 1982). Perhaps correlatively, faculty participation in decision making also declined during the last ten to fifteen years as external pressures increased. These lower levels of faculty involvement in decision making and planning have been linked to declining morale among professors (Anderson, 1983). It appears that in many institutions faculty members can influence decisions but cannot make the actual decisions. This influence follows from their status as professionals, rather than from their hierarchical position (Kenen and Kenen, 1978). Faculty members exert most influence on academic appointments and curriculum and least influence on financial matters.

Size and Complexity. A number of studies (Baldridge et al., 1978; Kenen & Kenen, 1978; Ross, 1977) show that an institution's size and complexity are closely related to faculty members' autonomy and power. Baldridge et al. (1978) found that larger institutions had more professional autonomy, fewer

bureaucratic constraints, more individual influence for the academic professional, and greater freedom for disciplinary departments.

Several factors help explain these findings. First, faculty in larger institutions work in more specialized units and generally may have a greater claim to external recognition and to more power, especially if they generate money for the institution in the form of grants or other funding. Also, faculty at larger institutions often are engaged in research that requires direct negotiation with funding agencies, giving them greater institutional autonomy. Second, at larger institutions the ratio of faculty to administrators is higher, and the administration is less able to exert control over the faculty (Blau, 1973). While a number of studies (Cares & Blackburn, 1978; Kenen & Kenen, 1978) link institutional size, complexity and quality to greater autonomy and power of faculty, not as much is known about differences in faculty members' power and participation within institutional types.

Traits That Influence Decision Making

Besides power and other characteristics of hierarchies, personal characteristics and needs also affect the way administrators make decisions, the types of decisions made, and the effectiveness of these decisions (Hill, 1979). Just as decision makers are motivated by common needs that affect the ways in which alternatives are developed, evaluated, chosen and justified, they also have personal traits that may be different from one decision maker to the next and that are likely to influence how they make decisions. This study examined self-concept and risk-taking.

Self-concept. One trait that can be expected to influence decision-making effectiveness is self-concept. Individuals with negative self-concepts are less likely to make effective decisions than those with a more positive views of themselves. Those with unfavorable self-concepts are likely to

experience greater anxiety than those with positive self-concepts, making a thorough search for and evaluation of alternatives extremely improbable. In addition, decision makers with relatively negative self-concepts may be unduly sensitive to social pressure. Instead of doing what they believe is right, they may do what they feel others believe is right or simply what they feel others want them to do.

Women administrators, in particular, may have more difficulties in this area than their male colleagues. Women have been socialized to seek approval from others, and their actions and feelings of self-worth are often dependent upon such approval. Thus, women may have trouble making decisions that jeopardize the approval they have been trained to seek. In such situations, women may make no decisions, waiting until all bases are covered, or may change their decisions unnecessarily.

Risk Taking. Another trait that influences decision making is risk-taking behavior. Not all decisions are of equal importance--or of equal riskiness. Some are strategic, with high risks; others are tactical, with low risks (Hage, 1980), Further, high-risk decisions are often more complex than low-risk decisions. A decision maker who has a high propensity for taking risks may fail to do a careful job of screening alternatives and may choose those that are unnecessarily risky. On the other hand, decision makers who are too concerned with avoiding risks are likely to be so constrained that they have difficulty committing themselves to decisions. The most effective individual is the one who knows when to take risks, when to continue screening alternatives and when to stop, when to pursue a risky course of action or when to avoid it.

Gender. The decision maker's gender also influences decision making. Being male or female affects one's self-concept and perception of what other people expect and how they react (Sargent, 1981). Bunker and Seashore (1977) suggest that men find traditional male managerial qualities confining and limited, even though these qualities have been and still are equated with success. Men also seem to be dissatisfied with their competitive job climate, feeling trapped by their traditional behavior patterns and dissatisfied with the relationships these patterns produce (Bunker & Seashore, 1977). In this regard, the concept of androgyny (Sargent, 1981), combining both "male" and "female" traits, purports to lead to more effective administrative behavior and may have significant implications for understanding how decisions are made by men and women.

Data Collection

A number of factors, then, influence decision making: organizational structure, power, self-concept, risk-taking behavior, and gender. This study examines these factors to determine how some administrators in higher education made decisions and which factors seemed to influence their decision-making styles most dramatically.

Subjects and Institutions

Letters were sent to six levels of administrators--presidents, vice-presidents for academic affairs, deans of students, chairpersons for departments of education, directors of admissions, and directors of financial aid--in six colleges and universities in the New York metropolitan area. The letter explained the nature of the study, asked the recipient to participate in an interview, assured the recipient that participation was confidential and anonymous, and stated that the researcher would call in about a week to arrange a convenient interview.

Of the six institutions included in the study, four had fewer than 5,000 students, while two institutions had more than 20,000 students. Three were colleges or universities founded by a religious order, one was a small public university, and two were large private universities. A total of thirty-three administrators in these institutions agreed to be interviewed. In some instances, the administrators' titles varied, but the roles and responsibilities of the various levels of administrators were comparable.

Interviews

Several kinds of questions were asked of the respondents during their interviews. The questions were designed both to elicit information about the administrators themselves and to determine the effects on their decision making of the factors of interest in this study. The interview questions were clustered under the following categories to facilitate the interview process.

1. The University: questions in this area dealt with the administrators' perceptions of decision-making processes on campus. Questions were asked to determine if one or more individuals emerged as the primary decision-makers for particular types of decisions. In addition, the researcher tried to determine the administrators' opinions of the decision process, in general, and where they felt they were positioned in the decision-making hierarchy.

2. Issues: these questions examined issues facing institutions of higher education today. The respondents were asked to describe which issues affected their institutions and which particular issue was most crucial to their institution.

3. Decision-making: this group of questions was designed to determine how each administrator made decisions. They also were asked to discuss their reactions to poor decision making.

4. Advice: these questions called on the administrators to elucidate issues that face higher education in general as well to advise administrators about decision making in higher education.

5. Decisions: for these questions, each administrator was asked to describe a decision he or she had made and to describe the steps leading to the decision, the person or persons involved, the constraints affecting the decision, and the outcome of the decision.

The interviews lasted one to several hours, depending primarily upon the volubility of the interviewee. One interview was quite short, however; an administrator, who had been enthusiastic and helpful during a telephone conversation, was extremely reluctant to respond to questions and stated that he had been instructed not to answer questions about the university.

Descriptive Comparisons Arranged by Rank of Administrators Interviewed

To determine if administrators at a particular level in the hierarchy made decisions in similar ways, the interview data were grouped by administrator rank.

Presidents

Five of the six presidents agreed to be interviewed. Four of the respondents were male, and one was female. The sixth president, also female, declined to be interviewed, citing a heavy travel schedule.

One of the presidents managed a large, public, coeducational university in New York. Two of the presidents directed small, private colleges with prior or present religious affiliations in New York and Connecticut. One was president of a large, private university in New Jersey, and the fifth was president of a large, private, coeducational university in New York.

The presidents interviewed reflected similarities in how decisions were made in their institutions. The majority said that the decision-making

process in their institutions was improving all the time. The presidents were also similar in their approach to decision-making and the factors that influenced those decisions: in all cases but one, the presidents employed a consultative approach to decision-making and involved a number of staff members in the decision process.

Three of the presidents stated that they made decisions based on precedents and new ideas. Another indicated that his approach varied according to the problem: he started de novo each time. The fifth president interviewed said that his approach to decisions was based on two principles: doing the greatest good for the greatest number and being consistent in his decisions.

Two of the presidents said that they used a combination of factors when making decisions, among which were intuition, conscience, political support, facts, and moral or value orientations. In contrast, the fourth president generally relied on a simpler model which involved facts and moral or value considerations. The fifth trusted to luck, intuition, and his judgment about the people involved.

Academic Deans

Five academic deans agreed to be interviewed. The sixth stated that he was too busy and did not anticipate being able to participate in the future. Although the title varied in some of the institutions, all of these administrators had similar responsibilities.

Like their presidents, the academic deans' answers to the interview questions were quite similar. All appeared to care considerably about their institutions, faculties, and students, and each dean portrayed himself to be influential within the college or university. A sense of dedication and commitment prevailed among these deans.

All of them felt that the decision process in their institutions was adequate, but each cited desired changes. Each was concerned, for example, about the changing nature of their students. In addition, all of the academic deans expressed concern about the effects of errors in judgment, and most treated subordinates' mistakes with sympathy. Like their presidents, the academic deans cited successful decisions made in a consultative manner.

All of the academic deans cited institutional research as the most helpful aid to their decisions. Three of them also depended on historical and narrative reports. As a group, they also used a combination of precedents and new ideas, while four of the academic deans also capitalized on facts, political support, intuition, and moral or value orientations to inform their decisions. Three of them also said that they relied on conscience as they formulated their decisions.

Deans of Students

Six deans of students agreed to be interviewed; three were male, three were female. As with the academic deans, the title varied somewhat from institution to institution, but their duties and responsibilities were essentially the same.

The interviews with the deans of students were informative. They seemed to view their responsibilities with grave seriousness. They appeared to have deep concern for their students' futures and indicated that they felt their offices were very influential within the institution. The majority of the deans of students, however, expressed the desire for more responsibility and for more contact with the president and other senior administrators.

Even though the presidents of their institutions detailed similar decision systems, these deans of students differed considerably in their descriptions of how decisions were made in their institutions. They also

described their own styles differently but gave similar kinds of advice about how decisions should be made.

Three of the deans used institutional research to support their decisions, while two of these deans used narrative and historical reports. One dean relied on staff input when she made decisions, and another dean stated that the data (or its source) depended on the type of decision. This last dean also depended on common sense when making decisions.

A combination of precedents and new ideas influenced two of these deans. Two others said that they relied on new ideas, data, and experience when making decisions. The other two deans stated that they molded their decisions according to situations and considered policy, precedent, needs, and exceptional circumstances before making their decisions.

Five of the deans also indicated that they depended primarily on conscience, intuition, facts, political support, and moral or value considerations when developing decisions. The sixth dean of students also relied on facts and moral or value orientations.

Chairpersons

Five of the chairpersons interviewed directed departments or programs of education. The other directed a department of humanities. Two of these chairpersons were female; four were male.

The chairs came from a variety of backgrounds. Some had worked their way up the hierarchy within their institutions, while others had been hired from other institutions. They all cited a variety of decisions in which they had been involved, and all but one chair evaluated these decisions as successful.

The chairs varied considerably in how they felt decisions were made at their institutions, and only half of the chairs interviewed believed that they were influential in these decisions. Similarly, the chairs differed in their

accounts of how they made decisions, what approaches they used, and which factors influenced them.

Institutional research provided the data used most often by four of the chairs. Three of them also depended on historical reports, while two almost exclusively relied on state and federal guidelines. Four of the chairs said that they based their decisions on precedents and new ideas, and another relied largely on new ideas. The sixth chair employed precedents, university policy, and common practice when he made decisions.

Conscience, intuition, facts, political support, and moral or value factors further informed or influenced these chairs' decisions. One chair claimed to rely solely on facts, while the others indicated that they used various combinations of these variables in their decision making.

Directors of Admissions

Five directors or deans of admissions agreed to be interviewed. The sixth offered no explanation for not wanting to be interviewed and stated that she was not interested in participating at any future time. Two of the five directors who were interviewed were female.

One of the directors became very uncooperative at the time of the interview. He had been extremely willing and enthusiastic during the telephone conversation to arrange the interview time and place, but appeared fearful about answering questions and refused to discuss the institution once the interview began.

Like the deans of students and the chairpersons, the directors responded variously about how decisions were made at their institutions. Only one of the directors felt that he had considerable influence in the decision-making process at his institution. Nevertheless, the directors were largely in agreement about the issues facing their institutions.

The directors appeared to approach decision making similarly and relied upon many of the same types of data and factors when they made decisions. Three of the directors said that they used a combination of institutional research, narrative reports, information from experts, and historical reports when making decisions. One said that he considered institutional research, information from experts, and historical reports when he made decisions, while one other mentioned only on institutional research. Four of these directors also indicated that they combined precedents and new ideas, while a fifth's primary focus was on increasing the quality and quantity of students.

Intuition, conscience, political support, facts, and moral or value considerations were the factors that influenced one director when he made decisions. Another director relied on facts, moral and value orientations, and some political support. A third said that she used political support, facts, conscience, and moral or value orientations when she made decisions. A fourth director depended primarily on facts, intuition, and conscience. The fifth declined to delineate influential factors.

Directors of Financial Aid

Six directors of financial aid agreed to be interviewed, two of whom were female. Like the deans of students and the chairpersons, few similarities existed among the directors of financial aid in their views about decision-making processes at their institutions. The majority of these directors were, however, dissatisfied with the process, despite the fact that the majority felt they had considerable influence in that decision process.

The directors agreed on a number of issues, with increased federal and state regulations the most often cited. In addition, the approaches used when making decisions differed among the directors, as did the factors which influenced their decisions.

Four of the directors said that they used institutional research and information from experts when making decisions, and two others also mentioned historical reports. One of the financial aid directors looked to precedents and new ideas for guidance, while two others relied on past decisions and experience. Another director stated that she depended mostly on new ideas, and the fifth stated that precedent his guide. The sixth director said that most of his decisions were made for him by state and federal regulations.

Facts and moral or value considerations were among the influential factors identified by three of the directors. A fourth indicated that facts and political support were the most important variables. A fifth director stated that, while facts were the most important part of his decisions, intuition, conscience, political support, and moral and value orientations were also influential. The last director combined intuition, conscience, facts, and moral and value considerations in his decision-making process.

It was apparent during the interviews that the directors of financial aid believed contact with lawmakers was vital. The majority expressed great frustration at the speed with which laws were changed and the inconvenience and impractical timing of many of these regulations. Unlike other administrators, these directors noted that computers were vital to the success of their operations.

Two Factors That Influence Decisions

Many factors seemed to influence the decisions of these institutional actors across institutions and roles. Gender and power, however, appeared to predominate, according to the interviewees.

Gender

In response to the role of gender in decision making, two of the presidents said they saw no differences in how male and female administrators

made decisions. On the other hand, three of the responding presidents thought that women administrators were definitely more intuitive and sensitive to people involved in decisions.

Among the academic deans, two responded as did their senior colleagues: they saw no differences in the ways in which female or male administrators make decisions. In contrast, the other three academic deans saw several differences. One felt that men needed to achieve consensus around their decisions more than women, another said just the opposite. The last thought that women administrators were much more attuned than men to discerning problems not immediately evident in decisions.

While one dean of students indicated that no differences existed between the sexes, two of them said that female administrators were more intuitive than their male counterparts, and two others indicated that men and women administrators tended to differ analytically, cognitively, and emotionally in their approaches to decisions. Style, too, seemed important to one dean, who differentiated between females and males according to how they interacted in the decision process: to her, males seemed readier to meet, while females were more inclined to telephone conversations and written memos.

Three of the department chairs felt that men and women administrators made decisions in similar ways, but three chairs cited differences. One of these thought that some females over-compensated for being female in a male-dominated environment, while another perceived that women tended to account more fully for feelings and values in decisions than did men. The third chair commented that, when she worked in a male-dominated setting, she had to "work twice as hard and be twice as good to stay in the same place."

The directors of admissions responded with considerable variety about the role of gender in decisions. One had no opinion, another had had no

experience with female administrators, and a third said that she had seen differences in a previous institution but not her present one. Two of the other directors felt that women were more aware of people and the affective components of decisions. They also thought that women administrators took more time making decisions, gathering information from multiple sources and teaching others about making decisions. These two directors also stated that they had found female administrators to be more process oriented than male administrators.

Two of the directors of financial aid saw no differences in how men and women administrators make decisions. One expressed reluctance to respond, based on a perception of an "anti-female" bias in his institution. Another director believed that the primary difference between the sexes was related to the types of male administrators attracted to women's colleges. According to her experience, these males tended to be less domineering and more insecure than males in other institutional settings. Two of the other directors felt that women administrators looked carefully at the facts involved and took more time to reach decisions than did their male counterparts. These two directors also believed that women considered the human side of decisions more than men and that males tended to discredit intuition when making decisions.

Power

While all of the presidents recognized that their considerable power depended in large measure on the nature of their positions, the academic deans attributed much of their power to accessibility to their presidents. The academic deans also felt that the large faculties that they represented gave them another basis of power, but one that was two-edged. That is, while they could gain leverage by representing their faculty's interests upward, they also had to answer to the faculty for the results.

The power of the deans of students came more from personal expertise than from position or who they represented. Five of the deans attributed their influence on decisions to their reputations for sound advice which was often sought and acted upon. Only one dean felt that his expertise--and influence--was limited to student affairs.

Like the academic deans who cited the size of their faculties as an important factor in their ability to influence decisions, three of the chairs felt that department size gave them considerable influence in decisions. These chairs also cited the number of students and their financial resources--also functions of size--as well as institutional respect for their input as additional reasons for their influence. Two of the chairs, however, were dissatisfied with their power. One felt that decisions were often made without consultation, and the other felt that the historically low status of his department--due to a serious past controversy--weakened his position.

Control of institutional resources also figured prominently in the influence directors of admissions reported. One indicated that his influence was considerable since his institution was eighty percent tuition driven, and he controlled seventy-five percent of those funds. Another director felt that he influenced budgetary matters but that he had much less to do with institutional image or academic affairs. Easy access to the president was cited by another director as the source of her influence. One director felt he had little influence in his institution because of a poor decision he had made several years earlier. The last respondent in this group felt that his influence was neither more nor less than his colleagues.

Four of the financial aid directors believed their power resided chiefly in their responsibility for large amounts of their institution's resources. The other two directors felt that their influence was circumscribed by their

location in their institution's hierarchy. Because of college policy, one said, she sat only on committees related to financial aid. The other reported considerable frustration at being near the bottom of a long chain of command. By the time her input reached the top, it usually was greatly changed.

Conclusions

The major findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

1. Organizational structure and size determined the way administrators made decisions and played their part in the decision process. In some instances, administrators in smaller, less centralized institutions had a greater influence on the way decisions were made than did their counterparts in larger, more centralized institutions. In a number of the organizations examined for this study, the decision structures seemed to be determined by the president's desire for greater or lesser participation by various administrators in the decision process.

2. The power or status of the administrators interviewed seemed to affect their role in the decision process. Most of the administrators mentioned budget, personnel, access to the decision process, and access to information to explain the sources of their power.

3. Two personality traits, self-concept and risk-taking, have been identified as influential in the ways administrators in higher education make decisions. It was difficult to determine each administrator's self-concept from the data received, although subjective conclusions could be based on an administrator's body language, manner of speaking, rapport with office personnel, and so forth. Those administrators who appeared more self-confident in these areas also spoke more confidently about their roles in institutional decisions.

Risk-taking also appeared to influence the ways some administrators made decisions, according to their statements. This trait was strongly linked to questions about gender and decision making, and several administrators suggested that females tended to have higher risk-taking propensities than their male counterparts.

4. The gender of the administrators also seemed to affect the ways they made decisions. According to some of the administrators interviewed, female administrators were seen as and seemed to be more conscious of people in the decision-making process and were better able to nurture colleagues and staff than males in similar roles. Further, some of those interviewed believed that female administrators took more time to make decisions than men did, were more attentive to detail, and were more process oriented than their male counterparts. They were also viewed as superior to men in their use of intuition in decision making.

5. This study further showed that most administrators said that they relied on more than one source of information or support for their decisions. Twenty-two administrators in the study cited institutional research, ten narrative reports, and thirteen historical reports as important guides for their decisions. In addition, nineteen of the thirty-three administrators interviewed used a combination of precedents and new ideas when they made decisions, while fourteen turned to conscience, intuition, political support, facts, and moral or value orientations to facilitate their decisions.

6. Finally, while some studies have indicated that centralization and bureaucratization threaten higher education (Kanter, 1983), the majority of administrators in this study, regardless of the size and complexity of their institutions, positively valued consultative decision making. They also indicated that this mode could lead to better understanding of problems and

issues and greater consensus among the multiple constituents in a college or university setting.

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